

Mr. Chairman, Members of the House Judiciary Committee. My name is Cheryl Moldenhauer Case Manager, Therapeutic Aide for Mental Health. I oppose SB221. I have done a lot of research on the internet about hoarding. In most cases it is the elderly and mentally ill that are found to be hoarders. SB 221 wants to convict them of a felony first and then follow up with a psychiatric examination. I am appalled at the idea that you would want to convict them of a felony, when they don't even realize they are committing a crime.

The punishment for an offender convicted of partner or family member assault in Montana shall be fined an amount not less than \$100 or more than \$1,000 and be imprisoned in the county jail for a term not to exceed 1 year or not less than 24 hours for a first offense.

In comparison the first offense for Animal Hoarding can be up to \$2500.00 or be sentenced to the department of corrections for a term not to exceed 2 years, or both. So it appears to me that you can commit a crime against a human being, and be less severely penalized, then if you hoard animals.

I took a copy of SB221 to my local sheriff's office and talked to them about it. They do not support the bill the way it is written. They felt there were enough laws already to charge people with animal cruelty.

We do not need legislative solutions to solve this problem. We can deal with this problem locally. We could organize an Advisory board of citizens and professionals. I've spoke to a therapist, a veterinarian and other people about the idea. They said they would volunteer their time to help with the problem. Wouldn't it be better to deal with the complaint this way and try to help the person? This would be far more effective and less dehumanizing.

I'm hoping that the House Judiciary Committee will have some compassion for our elderly and mentally ill citizens of Montana and vote no for SB221. If this were your parents or grandparents, relatives or someone you know would you want them treated this way. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Cheryl Moldenhauer
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